

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-12 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 093947

E. O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, IN, BG

SUBJECT: SISCO CONVERSATION WITH PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR

1. SUMMARY. PAKISTAN AMBASSADOR SULTAN KHAN CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY SISCO MAY 15 TO DISCUSS LATEST PAK/ INDIAN EXCHANGES REGARDING POWS AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN ISSUES. HOLMES NEA/ PAB SAT IN. KHAN SAID PAK STATEMENT OF APRIL 20 HAD BEEN GENERALLY POSITIVE BUT LATEST WORD FROM INDIANS CONTAINED IN MAY 8 SWARAN SINGH LETTER TO AZIZ AHMED AMOUNTS TO QUOTE REJECTION UNQUOTE OF NEGOTIATIONS. EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING OF USG DESIRE TO STAY OUT OF MIDDLE OF SOUTH ASIAN ISSUES, KHAN ASKED IF USG
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WOULD NOT QUOTE AT LEAST LET OTHERS KNOW YOUR POSITION UNQUOTE. SISCO RESPONDED THAT JUST AS WE HAD WELCOMED POSITIVE STEPS OF INDO/ BANGLADESH JOINT DECLARATION OF APRIL 17, IF FACTS WARRANTED, WE WOULD NOT HESITATE, WITHOUT GETTING INTO DETAILS OR MIDDLE OF NEGOTIATION; TO INDICATE TO INDIANS THAT LATEST RESPONSE APPEARED TO BE STEP BACKWARD. END SUMMARY.

2. AT HIS INITIATIVE PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR SULTAN KHAN CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY SISCO TO ONCE AGAIN DISCUSS THE POW ISSUE. SISCO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS HIS APPRECIATION FOR THE WARM RECEPTION ACCORDED THE DEPUTY SECRETARY AND HIM DURING THEIR APRIL VISIT TO ISLAMABAD. HE SAID IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE TO SEE PRESIDENT BHUTTO

ONCE AGAIN AND REMARKED HOW FORTUNATE PAKISTAN WAS TO HAVE AN ARTICULATE, INTELLIGENT STATESMAN LIKE BHUTTO AS ITS LEADER. NOTING THAT BHUTTO HAS NOW RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO IRAN, SISCO SAID THE SHAH HAD IN APRIL EXPRESSED TO THE DEPUTY SECRETARY TWO MAJOR CONCERNS: (A) THE SOVIET THREAT AND (B) IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO INTEGRITY OF PAKISTAN. THE SHAH TOLD THE DEPSEC THAT HE HAD BEEN FRANK IN HIS MARCH CONVERSATIONS WITH KOSYGIN WHO HAD ASKED WHY IRAN NEEDED TWO BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF NEW ARMS. THE SHAH REPLIED THAT IRAN HAD TO REMAIN STRONG, THAT THERE WAS A DANGER OF SUBVERSION AND THAT IRAN NOW PERCEIVES ITS SECURITY INTERESTS TO COVER THE WHOLE AREA OF THE PERSIAN GULF THROUGH THE SUBCONTINENT. IF PRESS REPORTS OF BHUTTO' S VISIT TO TEHRAN ARE ACCURATE, SISCO SAID, THE DEPSEC' S CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SHAH SEEM TO BE CONSISTENT WITH WHAT THE SHAH HAS SAID TO BHUTTO.

3. IN APPARENTLY PESSIMISTIC MOOD, KHAN APOLOGIZED FOR AGAIN TROUBLING SISCO ON THE ISSUE OF PAKISTANI POWS. BRIEFLY REVIEWING THE EXCHANGE OF STATEMENTS OVER THE PAST MONTH BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN, KHAN SAID THE GOP STATEMENT OF APRIL 20 HAD CLEARLY INDICATED PAKISTAN' S DIFFICULTIES IN AGREEING TO THE ENTIRE INDIA/ BANGLADESH PACKAGE, E. G., THE TRIAL OF 195 PAK POWS FOR WAR CRIMES AND THE REPATRIATION OF THE BIHARIS. THE RESPONSE NEVERTHELESS HAD BEEN GENERALLY POSITIVE. THE GOP HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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HOPED THAT THE GOI WOULD AGREE TO FOLLOW UP ON THE PAK PROPOSAL FOR DISCUSSIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS. BUT NOW SWARAN SINGH HAS WRITTEN AZIZ AHMED AND SAID THERE CAN BE NO DISCUSSIONS UNTIL PAKISTAN FIRST AGREES IN PRINCIPLE TO ENTIRE PACKAGE OF HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGES AS PROPOSED BY INDIA/ BANGLADESH. ONLY THEN WILL MODALITIES BE DISCUSSED.

4. SULTAN KHAN SAID GOP HAS BEEN SUSPICIOUS OF GOI/ BDG INITIATIVE FROM BEGINNING BECAUSE IT WAS CARRIED IN THE PRESS THREE DAYS BEFORE OFFICIALLY SENT TO GOP, BUT PAKISTAN HAD GRASPED AT THE PROPOSAL AS THE FIRST HOPE IN MANY MONTHS. HOWEVER, NOW REJECTION QUOTE TAKES US BACK TO SQUARE ONE UNQUOTE. HE SAID HE DOESN' T SEE HOW PAKISTAN CAN ACCEPT INDIA/ BANGLADESH PACKAGE IN PRINCIPLE. GOP HAS THEREFORE FILED APPLICATION WITH ICJ ASKING IT TO PREVENT INDIA FROM TRANSFERRING 195 POWS TO BANGLADESH.

5. SISCO SAID USG DOES NOT WANT TO GET INTO QUOTE QUARTERBACKING POSITION UNQUOTE BUT WE REMAIN HOPEFUL DISCUSSIONS CAN PROCEED. HE SAID PAKISTAN MAY BE ABLE TO FINESSE ITS RESPONSE IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE DOORS FOR NEGOTIATIONS ARE KEPT OPEN. SISCO SAID HE FELT THE GOI

AND BDG FIND THEIR INTERNATIONAL POSITION ON POWS ONEROUS. FACTS ARE, HOWEVER, THAT THE ISSUE HAS TO BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN INDIA, BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN. DRAWING ON THE ANALOGY OF THE STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, SISCO SAID IT IS TO PAKISTAN' S ADVANTAGE TO CONTINUE TO BE FLEXIBLE EVEN IN FACE OF WHAT MIGHT BE A STEP BACKWARD.

6. ON MATTER OF ICJ, SISCO REMARKED IT WAS
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